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ONLY A GIRL'S HEART.*

A MYSTERY OF HADDON'S FERRY.

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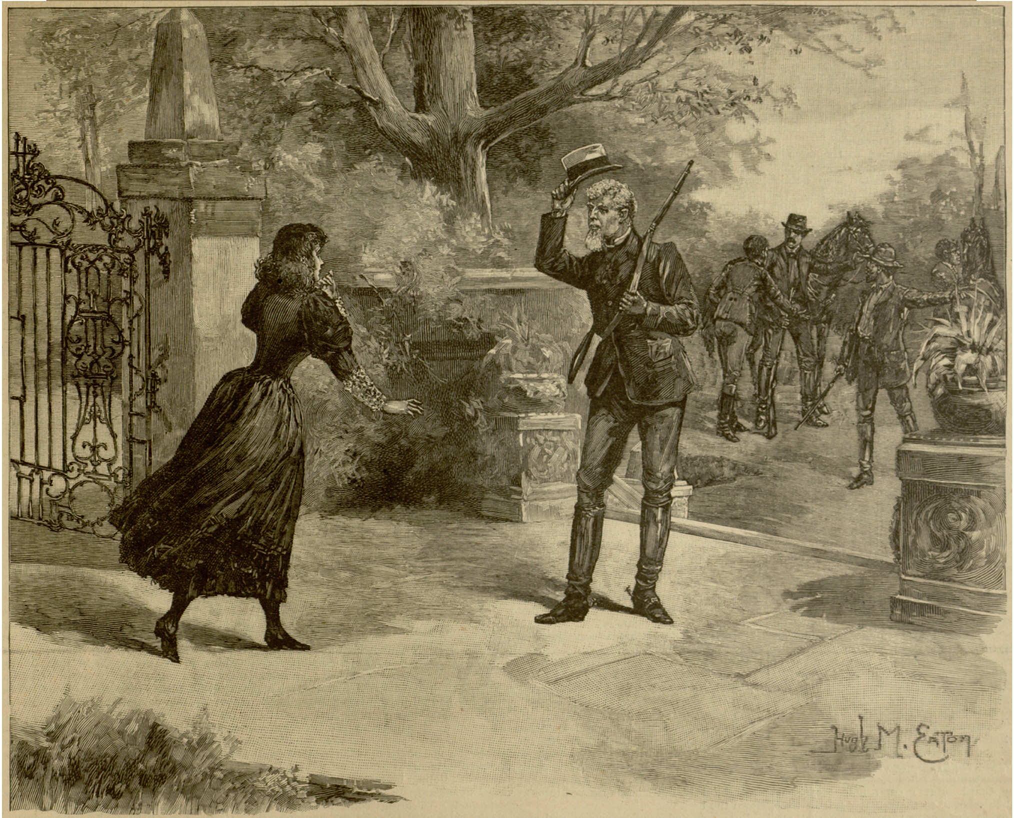

THE SHERIFF AND HIS MEN AT SUMMIT MANOR.

SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS INSTALLMENTS.

[Time: Shortly after the Mexican War. Place: Wilde County, in and about the Alleghanies. Scene: Haddon's Ferry, on the night of a terrific thunderstorm. Gabriel Haddon, the sexagenarian ferryman, while revealing to Gertrude, a lovely, fifteen-year-old girl, that she is not his grandchild but a foundling, is summoned to the deathbed of old General Slaughter. During his absence, in response to appealing cries of "Boat!" from across the river, Gertrude braves the storm and ferries across Sallust Rowley with his horse. She gives them shelter and food. Rowley, a lively chap of twenty, who is at once deeply enamored of her, confesses that he is eluding those who are in close pursuit of him for a deed which, he stoutly asserts, is not disreputable. Gertrude [illegible] deaf ear to the pursuers' repeated cries of "[illegible]oat!"

At Summit Manor, on this eventful night, the eve of her wedding-day, "the queenly, dark-eyed" Geraldine, with her young cousin, Patricia Fitzgerald, is impatiently awaiting the coming of her laggard lover, Col. Gerald Fitzgerald. He has gone to Washington "on business." At early dawn, the women are startled in their vigil by the precipitate arrival of Cousin Rowley, who has been with the delinquent.]

CHAPTER V.

A FEARFUL MYSTERY.

"SALLY! Oh, I am so glad you have come! Though you needn't have butted me over for all that!" exclaimed Patricia, recovering the exclaimed Patricia, recovering the balance that Mr. Sallust Rowley's impetuous entrance had nearly overset. "But where is Colonel Fitzgerald? Why doesn't he come in?" she inquired, peering beyond him into the darkness of the early dawn.

"Don't ask me, Pat! That's a brick," cried the young man, in a tremor.

"Why, Sallust Rowley, what is the matter with you? You look as white as a sheet, and you tremble like a leaf. What on earth ails you?" demanded Patricia, noticing for the first time his panic-stricken aspect.

"Don't ask me, Pat, that's a trump!" exclaimed Sallust, between his chattering teeth.

"I *will* ask you, and you shall tell me. What have you been up to? You look as if you expect to be shot the next minute. What have you done? Have you 'slain a man in your wrath, and a young man to your hurting?'" sharply persisted Patricia.

The youth turned paler than he was before, but he did not reply.

"What, in the deuce, ails you, boy? *Have* you robbed a bank!" demanded Patricia.

"No; but I dread to meet *her!*" exclaimed Sallust, shaking.

"To meet *whom?*" cried Patricia, impatiently.

"*Her*—Gerry! What *can* I say to her?" he groaned, shivering.

"If you have anything to say to *me*, Mr. Sallust Rowley, you had better say it at once," suggested a calm, stern voice, as Geraldine Fitzerald came from the drawing-room and confronted him.

Sallust Rowley drew back, aghast.

"Why is not Colonel Fitzgerald with you? Where did you leave him?" inquired Geraldine, in a voice forced by her own strong will into tones of calmness.

"Don't ask me, Ger—Miss Fitzgerald, I mean. And don't look at me so, please. Your eyes go through and through me like a knife. Don't, please, that's a brick—I mean a lady! Let me go in and rest myself, please. I am tired almost to death!"

They followed him—Geraldine speechless in astonishment and indignation, Patricia noisy with fright and anxiety.

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"Sally!" she exclaimed, peremptorily, "you talk and act like a lunatic, and I am not agoing to stand it—there! You shall tell us, this very moment, what you mean by your mysterious reserve!"

"I can't tell you, Patricia! I can't, indeed! Upon my soul and honor! Don't ask me—that 's a brick!" cried the victim.

"I *will* ask you, and I will make you tell, too, you red-headed ape! Why did not Colonel Fitzgerald keep his appointment and come down with you?"

"I can't tell you! Indeed, goodness knows, I can't!" whimpered Sallust.

"Where did you leave him?"

"What 's the use of asking me, if I can't tell you? It only torments me and enrages you for nothing!"

"*I'll* torment you! Since Colonel Fitzgerald has not come down to-night, *when* is he coming down? This morning? This evening? *When?*" persisted the girl.

"I cannot tell you," persevered the youth.

"Has anything happened to him? If so, what is it? What has happened to him?" stubbornly continued Patricia.

"I cannot tell you," stolidly repeated Sallust. "And I *will* not! There, now

Sallust. "And I *will* not! There, now, Miss Patricia! I would not—no, not if I were to be put upon the rack!"

"Wish I had the power to do it!" muttered Patricia; "but, never mind. Uncle Fitzgerald will make you tell, I'll bet!"

"No, he won't, neither! And even if he *should*, you would wish he *hadn't*, now mind you! If ever there was a case where ignorance is bliss, this is one. But he won't, *I'll* bet! I shall be off from this place in ten minutes? I am going away! I am going to leave the country!" he exclaimed, in great emotion. "I only just dropped in to tell you to put off the wedding-guests as well as you can. For there can be no wedding without the bridegroom, and the bridegroom won't put in an appearance."

Geraldine Fitzgerald had up to this time stood silent and motionless, with her hands resting on the back of her chair and her dark eyes fixed steadily on the face of the speaker. Now she addressed him in a tone of quiet authority.

"One thing I think you will tell me, Mr. Rowley: Does Gerald Fitzgerald still live?"

"Yes, he still lives," answered Sallust, sulkily.

"So far, good. Another question I think you will answer me: Is Colonel Fitzgerald in good health?"

"Yes, he is in good health."

"Has he sent by you any message or any note of explanation as to his failure to keep his appointment here?"

"No, ma'am, he has not sent by me any message or any note of explanation as to his failure to keep his appointment here; nor, if he had, would I, under the circumstances, have delivered it. There, I have answered three questions. Now, the rack shall not wring another word from me on that subject!" exclaimed Sallust, grimly.

"It is quite enough. I do not wish to ask you another question," muttered Geraldine between her set teeth and white lips. "Colonel Fitzgerald is alive and well, and yet he comes not to keep his engagement on his wedding-day and sends no explanation of his conduct!"

And with these words she sallied out of the room.

"There, you little villain, see what you have done!" exclaimed Patricia, in a fury.

"Upon my soul, I didn't do anything!" pleaded Sallust.

"You have said too little or too much."

"I didn't mean to say anything, but she compelled me."

"Better you had kept silence than have said what you did."

"I know it, and I wanted to keep silence, but she would not let me."

"Then, since you were forced to speak, it would have been better that you had told the worst, whatever that worst may be, than to leave such vague horrors to be inferred," said Patricia, sternly.

"Ay, that 's because you don't know anything about it. But, I say! *I* must be off—"

"Stop! You told our cousin that Colonel Fitzgerald is alive and well, and yet sends no note or message explanatory of his strange conduct. Now answer me this question, which I think could never have occurred to Geraldine, or she would have asked it: *Is Colonel Fitzgerald at liberty?*"

"I shall answer no more questions. Good-bye, Pat. I 'm sorry to leave you, but the best of friends must part," said the young man, rising and taking his hat.

"Stop! You shall not go until you have

seen my uncle and given *him* some explanation, if you will not give it to any one else!" cried Patricia, flying to the bell.

"What is the use of your doing that? There is not a servant in the house out of bed at this time of the morning," said Sallust, drawing on his gloves.

"True! True! I will go to uncle's room myself!" exclaimed Patricia, flying out of the parlor and up the stairs.

But before she knocked at her uncle's door, she remembered that she must not alarm him; so she moderated her haste and knocked softly.

"Who is that?" inquired the voice of Mr. Fitzgerald from within.

"It is I, uncle—Pat."

"What do you want, my dear?"

"Only to tell you that Sallust has arrived and that there is some little delay in the coming of Cousin Gerald."

"Delay in the coming of Gerald! Is he ill?" demanded Mr. Fitzgerald.

"Oh, no! He is quite well, I assure you. But something has occurred to delay his arrival."

"*What* has occurred? Can't you speak, Patricia?"

"I do not know, uncle. Sallust refuses to explain to me or to Geraldine, but perhaps he will to you."

"Will Gerald be here this evening, then, in time for the wedding?"

"I do not know, sir. Sallust can explain. Shall I send him to you?"

"Yes. Tell him to come up at once. All this is very strange and disagreeable!" exclaimed Mr. Fitzgerald, moving as if he were about to rise from his bed.

Patricia flew down-stairs to intercept the departure of the visitor. She rushed out into the hall and tore open the front-door, only in time to hear the ringing hoofs of the rider's horse, as he galloped furiously away by the bridle-path that led down the mountain-side to the turnpike road.

"What *can* be the matter?" she asked herself, as she retreated into the house. "What *can* have happened to Gerald Fitzgerald to keep him from his appointment with his promised bride upon her wedding-day? If he were dead or if he were ill, one could understand it; but he is alive and well, and his conduct is quite incomprehensible. It is a great mystery; and it is said that where there is mystery there is always guilt. But guilt in connection with Gerald Fitzgerald's name? Impossible!"

As Patricia re-entered the drawing-room she found a sleepy servant, apparently just risen and engaged in opening the shutters.

"Did you see Mr. Sallust Rowley this morning?" she inquired.

"Yes, miss. He left his horse in the stable and borrowed a fresh one—Flash-o'-Lightning—and he says, with his compliments, as he will leave it at the Wildeville stables to be sent back here, and we can keep his horse until called for," replied the man.

"That is cool, upon my word and honor! I wonder if he thinks they keep a livery stable here!" muttered Pat to herself.

At this moment Mr. Fitzgerald's old body-servant entered the room, saying, respectfully:

"Please, miss, old marster say how he is waiting for Mr. Sallust."

"Tell your master that Mr. Sallust has left the house. Or—stay! Is Mr. Fitzgerald up and dressed?"

"Yes, miss. I jes' done put him in his easy-chair."

"Then I will go to him myself. Go on and tell him so," said Patricia.

The servant bowed and led the way to the chamber of his master.

Patricia found her uncle seated in his easy-chair by the front window, with his gouty foot upon its rest.

"Oh, is it you, my dear? Where is Sallust?" said the old gentleman, putting out his hand and drawing a chair near his own and pointing for Patricia to take it.

The young girl sat down and answered cautiously:

"Sallust has gone, uncle. He had already gone when I returned to the drawing-room."

"But, this is very strange," said the old gentleman, in a displeased tone; and then he commenced and questioned Patricia closely as to all that had passed in her interview with the mysterious visitor.

Patricia acted with all the tact and discretion of which she was mistress, and found to her great relief that the invalid was not nearly so much upset by the news, or the lack of news, as she had expected to find him.

"It is all very strange; but, of course, Gerald is in the right. It is probably some other man's interest or honor that is somehow involved, and Gerald cannot explain without some breach of trust. I hope Gerald will be able to reach here this evening before the hour appointed for the wedding ceremony. But however that may be, or whatever the mystery may be, my confidence in my son's honor is immovable," exclaimed the old man.

"So is mine, uncle," added Patricia, earnestly.

"I thank you, my dear. But what does Geraldine say?" he anxiously inquired.

"She says very little, uncle," Patricia cautiously replied.

"I fear that she is vexed."

"She did not say so."

"Oh, no, she would never say so! She would die first! Ah, well, it will all be right when Gerald comes this evening! If he does not know how to soothe a sulky sweetheart he is no true Fitzgerald! There, my dear, you need not wait. Tell them to send me up my cup of chocolate."

So dismissed, Patricia left the room and went down-stairs, and gave her uncle's order to the housekeeper.

She now found all the rooms open and the rays of the rising sun streaming into all the east windows that faced the river, and lighted up the house.

She passed out of the front-door and went down upon the terrace overhanging the river, to walk there for a while, to rid herself, if possible, of the anxious and gloomy thoughts inspired by the strange demeanor of her cousin, Sallust Rowley.

The summer morning succeeding the storm was splendid beyond description. The scenery was magnificent. The sun was just sparkling up from behind the Eagle-Roost Ridge, and irradiating all the wooded hills, mountains, brooks and river into a dazzling conflagration of morning glory.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PURSUERS.

While she was gazing in breathless awe and admiration upon this scene, the sound of horses' hoofs struck upon her ear.

She turned in the direction of the sound, half expecting to see Sallust Rowley come riding back.

She did not see him, but she saw four strange men gallop up to the house and dismount.

Grooms, that were always in attendance to wait on visitors, came up and took their horses. The men walked up the terrace steps. They stood upon the terrace for a moment, looking about them, and then the oldest man, who seemed to be the leader, came up to Patricia, bowed and said:

"I beg your pardon, miss, but we wish to see the master of the house."

Patricia, stricken with terror, and connecting this strange visit with the still stranger conduct of Sallust Rowley, answered:

"I do not think that you can see Mr. Fitzgerald. His health is in a very critical condition. He is confined to his chamber with an attack of gout and is forbidden by the doctor to see any stranger or to have any excitement. Will not I do as well?"

"Scarcely, miss. Is there no other man about the house besides the master. then, that we can see?" inquired the stranger.

"There is no one here, except the master and the man-servants. I am afraid you will have to confide your business to me," said Patricia, gathering courage.

"Well, miss, it is not a pleasant thing to say to a young lady, but time presses. In fact, we have a warrant here for the arrest of one Sallust Rowley," said the stranger.

"A warrant! For the arrest of Sallust Rowley!" exclaimed Patricia, in amazement and horror; for to her apprehension a warrant and an arrest were the very consummation of mortal misery and disgrace.

"Do not be alarmed, miss. We do not intend to hurt him. Where shall we find the young man?" inquired the officer.

"I do not know! He is not here! I do not know where he is; but for Heaven's sake, tell me—what has he done?"

"It is not necessary to go into that, my dear young lady. Tell us where we can find the young man, so that we can make the arrest quietly without causing an unseemly disturbance in a gentleman's house. Come—where is Mr. Sallust Rowley?"

"I do not know—indeed, I do not know! He is not here!" said Patricia, in a panic.

"Come, come, miss. We know that he crossed Haddon's Ferry at midnight last night, and rode here, reaching the house at dawn this morning. We know this for a fact, so that if you do not give him up quietly we shall be obliged to search the premises," said the officer resolutely.

"Oh, for the love of mercy, do not *think* of searching the house! It would kill my uncle, in his present critical state! And you would not cause the death of an old man, would you?" exclaimed Patricia, wringing her hands in a great trouble.

"Of course not; but it is *you*, my dear young lady, who are endangering your uncle's safety, by refusing to give up the man we want and compelling us to make a disturbance by searching the house. Show us the young man, and we will take him quietly and go about our business."

"But I do not know where he is. I only know that he is not here," persisted Patricia, in great distress. "Do you suppose for a moment that I am capable of telling a falsehood, even to shelter him?" demanded Patricia, her face flushing crimson at the implication.

"I beg pardon, miss, but what are we to think?"

"Listen and I will tell you all I know

Listen and I will tell you all I know about it. Sallust Rowley *did* arrive here very early this morning. He stayed about half an hour, but seemed during that time to be in great haste to be off again. At the end of that time, he went off, leaving his tired horse here and taking a fresh one. He has been gone nearly an hour. I do not mind giving you this information, because I think it will do him no harm, as he has made good his escape, and it will prevent your disturbing an invalid gentleman by searching the house. If you still doubt me and think that my story needs confirmation, you can go down to the stables and question the coachman and groom."

The men exchanged a few words apart with each other, and then the elder said:

"We will, at any rate, go to the stable and hear what the people there have to say before we proceed to search the house. If they put us on the right track, we need not return here again to molest you, miss."

And with these words the officer rode off to the stable, followed by his companions.

"Well," said Patricia, looking after them, "I would have been worse than a traitor to have given them any information, "Yes, I know; that will do, Het. You need not wait."

"Yes, honey; I bring your cup o' coffee immediate," said the woman, finally retreating.

She soon reappeared with a slight breakfast arranged on a waiter, which she placed upon a stand near the young lady.

Pat, who thought she could take nothing but a cup of coffee, managed to dispose also of a couple of rolls, a fried perch and an egg.

Then Het removed the waiter, and Patricia began to walk uneasily up and down the floor until she was startled by the sound of horse's hoofs galloping past.

She ran to the window and looked out and saw the sheriff's officers riding away.

"Let them go. They will never catch my Sally now! But, oh, what *has* the unlucky chap been up to, to have the sheriff's officers in pursuit of him?" she groaned, wringing her hands.

The sound of the sheriff's horses' feet had scarcely died away before another horse was heard galloping toward the house.

"Good gracious, what is coming now? One would think this house was the head-

One would think this house was the headquarters of a cavalry regiment, or of the flying artillery !" she exclaimed, hurrying to the door and tearing it open.

"What is the matter *now?* What news have *you* brought?" she inquired of the agitated messenger.

"Berry bad news, miss ! I 's sorry to say Ole Marse Gen'ral is gone, miss—passed away a little arter midnight."

"Oh, thank Heaven !" fervently ejaculated Patricia.

"Miss !" exclaimed the messenger, looking aghast.

"Oh, I didn't mean that—of course, I didn't ! Of course, I am *very* sorry for the poor old gentleman !' amended Patricia, gravely.

"She 's 'fused in her min' along of de grief. I oughtn't to 'a' broke' it to her so suddint," said the messenger, musingly.

"But it will *put off the wedding*, won't it ?" exclaimed Patricia.

"In course it *must*, miss ; which was de berry reason why Miss Maxima sent me off in sich hot haste to tell you; 'caze, she says, it wouldn't be decent to have marrying nor giving in marriage goin' on wid such a near delation ob de family layin' dead in his house."

"Did Miss Maxima write?"

"No, miss; she hadn't no time to write. She send me off soon 's ebber de breaf was out'n de ole marster's body, so you dem here would have a chance to send round de news and stop the weddin'ers from comin' to de house ob mournin'."

"Get some breakfast in the kitchen. You must be hungry after your long ride."

"Dat 's so, Miss Pat. You nebber spoke a truer word in all your life. Dis poor ole nigger 's front waistcoat is gone clear to his backbone along of emptiness."

Once more Patricia sought the chamber of her invalid uncle.

"Well, my dear, have you heard anything from Maxima this morning!" inquired the old gentleman.

"Yes, uncle," replied Patricia, availing herself of this favorable opening for her grave news.

"Well, my love, what does she say? Is the general any better? Will she be here in time for the wedding?”

“The wedding will have to be put off, I fear, dear uncle.”

“What! Is he so ill as all that?”

“He is gone, uncle. A messenger has just come from Hill Top Hall to bring the news.”

“What! Gone, is he? Poor old fellow! Well, this *is* sudden! Yes, old as he is—thirty years older than I am, my dear—it is sudden! Death always seems sudden, I do suppose. As you say, the wedding must be put off. Where is Geraldine?”

“She has not yet left her room. She lost a great deal of rest last night, and is trying to take some this morning, I suppose,” said Patricia.

“Then, my dear, in the absence of Gerald and Geraldine, I must ask you to take some orders in this crisis. Send off as many men as our stables can mount, with messages to all our invited guests, informing them of the death of General Slaughter, and the consequent postponement of the wedding. Send them in different directions, and give each man a list of the people he is to call on. Can you do this, my dear child?”

“Certainly I can, my dear uncle! I will

“Certainly I can, my dear uncle! I will set about it immediately!” eagerly exclaimed Patricia, as she hurried away.

“Oh, my good gracious me, what a fortunate thing! Ah, how wicked of me to say that! But I can’t help feeling so much relieved to think that *now* we have a good excuse that every one can understand for putting off the wedding that couldn’t come on,” she said to herself, as she hurried down-stairs, and rang the bell for the housekeeper.

“Young ladies ready for breakfast yet?” inquired Aunt Het, as she came in.

“No; but never mind them now. Have you seen Saturn from Hill Top?”

“Yes, honey, I done seen Satan jes’ now,” said Aunt Het.

“You have heard his news?”

“Yes, honey. Ole Marse Gen’al Slaughter gone. Well, honey, nothin’ but what might ’a’ been spected dese twenty years or more. Why, honey, dat ole man is ’siderable ober ninety year ob age! ’Deed, dear knows, ef it had ’a’ been *me* lef’ so long, I done been afeared as de good Lord had forgot to call me, an’ I might keep on libbin’ till I dried up and blowed away. Ah, but he *was* a saint on dis yeth! We have sperienced a great loss in him, rest his soul!" sighed Het, wiping her tearless eyes.

"And now you know, Het, that the wedding which was to have been celebrated tonight must be put off," said the more matter-of-fact Patricia.

"Yes! All is wanity and wexation ob de sperrits! Little do us feel like makin' merry wid music and dancin' wid sich a good ole man laying stark dead in his house and gone to glory."

"I want you to send the head groom to me for orders, Het. We shall have to dispatch messengers in every direction to stop the wedding-guests from coming."

"Yes, honey, in course. I go send him right straight up to you," sighed Het, hurrying away from the room.

Patricia walked about the floor while waiting for the messenger to do her errand.

Presently, the door opened, and the old groom entered, bowing respectfully.

"Domitian, we have had grave news this morning. General Slaughter has departed this life," said the young lady.

The old servant bowed solemnly.

"The wedding must be deferred in recognition of this event. Your master desires that you have every horse in the stable saddled, and a man mounted on each to dispatch with the news to our friends to prevent their coming here this evening. As the men mount let them ride up to the house one by one to take further orders from me. Hasten, Domitian, and do your errand."

The old man bowed even more solemnly than before and left the room.

Patricia passed into her uncle's study, seated herself at his desk and wrote out a list of names for each messenger's route.

When she had completed her task, she gathered up the slips of paper and went out upon the front terrace to give them to her messengers. She found about a dozen mounted men awaiting her orders. Having dispatched all her couriers she returned to the house.

She was met in the hall by all the young bridemaids, who had come down in a body and now gathered around her and greeted her with girlish delight.

"Oh, isn't it a glorious morning after the storm!" exclaimed Horatia Rowley, the pretty, little, red-headed sister of Sallust.

Sallust.

"A perfectly lovely day for a wedding," chimed in May Faire, the golden-haired orphan schoolmate of Geraldine Fitzgerald.

"Blessed is the bride that the sun shines on," quoted the dark-eyed Anna Condé, the special friend of Horatia.

"Yes, yes! You are all right. Only, there will be no wedding and no bride!" exclaimed Patricia.

The news fell like a thunder-bolt in the mist of a clear sky.

"No wedding and no bride?" exclaimed Horatia.

"What on earth has happened?" cried May Faire.

"Is General Slaughter much worse?" asked Horatia.

"General Slaughter died last night, a little after midnight. A messenger from Miss Rowley brought the news this morning. Couriers have just been dispatched in all directions to carry the news to our many distant friends, and save them the useless trouble of coming to a wedding that is not going to be celebrated."

"Oh, dear me, what a very shocking thing!" exclaimed Anna.

"What a terrible disappointment!" cried Horatia.

"What does poor dear Geraldine say about it?" inquired May.

"Poor dear Geraldine don't know it yet. She has not left her room, and I do not mean that she shall be disturbed until she does. And now, girls, we have nothing to do but to eat our breakfast with what appetite we may. It has been waiting long enough," said Patricia, as she led the way down the hall.

But even when they were gathered around the table, where a tempting morning meal had been laid, the young people could not eat or drink for chattering.

"And to think that Colonel Fitzgerald and his groomsmen will arrive here to-day ignorant of all that has happened! Oh, won't it be a heavy blow to a bridegroom?" cried May Faire.

"Horrible!" chimed in Horatia and Anna.

In the midst of their chattering the door quietly swung open and Geraldine Fitzgerald entered the room. She was clothed entirely in white from head to foot. There was not a speck of color about her morning dress. Her face was deadly pale and in dress. Her face was deadly pale, and in contrast to the raven blackness of her hair it seemed as white as her dress.

She bowed in silence to her young friends, advanced quietly and took her place at the table.

Her presence fell like a damper upon the flow of girlish talk.

"You have heard what has happened, Geraldine," said Patricia.

"Yes, I have heard what has happened. Desiré told me when she came to dress me. Give me some strong coffee, Patricia," said Geraldine, with stolid calmness.

The young girl handed the cup of coffee in silence. She knew well that it was not the death of General Slaughter nor yet the postponement of her wedding that had stricken all the color from Geraldine's face; but the mysterious absence and still more mysterious silence of her destined bridegroom, that had fallen like a death-blow on the beautiful and blooming bride-elect.

As soon as the uncomfortable breakfast was over, carriages were ordered, and the young bridemaids took a reluctant leave.

Patricia was left alone in the morning sitting-room with her cousin.

"Tell me now frankly, Geraldine: Would you prefer that I, too, should go or that I should stay here with you?"

"You must go, Patricia, and I shall go with you. I will not pass another night or day under the roof of Colonel Fitzgerald," said the young lady, resolutely.

"Geraldine! Oh, don't talk in that way, my dear! Wait and see. Gerald may come this very day and answer for himself," exclaimed Patricia, in alarm, but still trying to hope against hope.

"Or he may not come. I will not wait his lordly pleasure," grimly replied the young lady.

"He may still write and explain, dear Geraldine. Wait until the boy comes from the post-office, to see whether there is a letter for you," pleaded Patricia.

"I tell you I *will not* wait the arrogant pleasure of Colonel Fitzgerald!" exclaimed Geraldine, haughtily. "I have ordered the carriage, and we shall leave this place within an hour."

"Thank Heaven, here comes Bob from the post-office!" exclaimed Patricia, starting up and flying out to seize the mail-bag.

She flew back again into the parlor, opening the bag with trembling fingers.

Geraldine looked on with a haughty glance and "lips that scarce their scorn forbore."

"There! I told you so. A letter from Colonel Fitzgerald for you! It is the only one in the bag, too! Take it and repent your haste!" exclaimed Patricia, throwing a thin envelope into her cousin's lap.

Geraldine commanded herself as only a proud woman could have done. She did not snatch the letter; she took it up slowly, opened it deliberately and read—first to herself and then aloud—to Patricia.

The letter was without date or signature. It contained but two lines:

"Geraldine, trust me in this day as I should trust you all days!"

"I *will not* trust him, since he does not confide in me!" indignantly exclaimed Geraldine, throwing the note from her. "I have trusted him too long and too fatally! I suffered myself to be brought here to his house as a bond-maid to her master!

And my humility has been repaid with treachery and contempt. I shall leave this house to-day. I shall go with you, Patricia, to the home of your worthy uncle, my other good guardian! I thank Heaven I have that other guardian for a refuge in this time of trouble! Royal Greenleaf does not make the boast of this race that never

‘Has falsehood or disgrace
Been seen to soil Fitzgerald’s plume,
Or mantle in his face!’

But I think I may quite as safely trust his honor. I will stay at Greenwood until Christmas, when I shall come of age. Then I will take up my abode at one of my own manors. But never again will I enter the house of the traitor, Gerald Fitzgerald!”

[TO BE CONTINUED IN OUR NEXT—NO. 48.]